SUBJECTS.

shalls and Chowkeys. Under the new system of accounts, the merchants had to pay the duty into the Taluk Treasury and produce the receipt at the bankshall before the tobacco bales could be removed. This resulted in loss and inconvenience to the merchants.

Dewan's reply.—Certain financial reforms have been introduced in regard to the Tobacco revenue. Regard should be had for these before any change could be made. If, however, there is any special inconvenience to the public, it will be considered and the necessary changes effected.

142. Allotment for irrigation and drainage works in north and middle Travancore.

Mr. K. Parameswaran Pillai (Member, Nayar Samajam, Quilon) requested that a reasonable and sufficient amount of money might be allotted for irrigation and drainage works in north and middle Travancore and that a special Irrigation Engineer might be deputed to inspect the agricultural centres and do the needful. Agriculture was dependent for its success mainly upon the monsoons which were becoming more and more precarious every year. Failure of crops had become constant. Irrigation works included drainage works which were specially needed in north Travancore for the prevention of destructive floods. He quoted figures to show that the amount spent on original works in those parts was very small, averaging only Rs. 592 per annum. The many canals and water-ways were either left incomplete or had silted up and become useless for want of attention. There was much room for improvement and if Government did not bestir themselves much harm might result.

Dewan's reply.— Will be attended to.

The same member also brought forward the following representations :—

143. Malayalam to be made the language of the courts.

(1) That Malayalam, the language of the country, might be made the language of the Courts of law and judgments and proceedings might as far as possible be written in Malayalam: and

144. Disposal of Government contracts in parts.

(2) That, in order to enable the people of the country to take up works on contract, all Government contracts might be auctioned in parts and not disposed of in one lot as monopolies which are advantageous neither to the Government nor to the people.

He illustrated his request by taking the cases of timber and salt. He said that it was a matter of regret that all good timber was given to a foreign contractor who exported the whole to foreign parts and the local public had to be content with what had been rejected by the

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contractor and pay for it exorbitant prices. The sale of timber was practically in the hands of a single foreign firm. The result has been that the people of the country could neither trade in it and derive any profit from it nor get good timber for their own purposes.

Again, in the supply of salt, things were not as they should be. The salt was mixed with sand and sold to the people from the bankshalls. The merchants were largely responsible for this. The remedy, he suggested, was to leave not only the import but also the sale of salt to the merchants, instead of Government taking the responsibility themselves. This would stimulate competition and there would be greater inducement for the merchants to keep a supply of good salt equal to the demand. The Government might levy the duty on salt on its arrival at the ports.

Dewan's reply.—It may be of interest to you and your co-members to know that this was the endeavour of Government when the new Excise Department was created. The Government had under consideration the proposal to throw the import, storage and sale of salt open to competition. But no competitors came forward; and, as the next best course, Government entered into a contract for its supply on very favourable terms, and in order to prevent all risk of inferior salt being brought in, Government propose to depute a reliable agent to Bombay to select the salt that is to be imported by the merchants. There is every guarantee that good salt will be procured and with a view to prevent the salt being tampered with and mixed with sand the new rule for selling it by bags sealed at port depôts was introduced. That was not, however, acceptable to many and to meet their wishes, it has been proposed, as I have already told you, to relax the rule and allow sales to be held in retail also, as of old. As far as the salt question is concerned, every endeavour is being made not only to get the commodity on terms favourable to Government and the people, but also to have its quality improved and facilities afforded for its purchase by the people in small quantities, in good quality and at favourable rates.

145. Improvement of water-way between Cochin and Trivandrum.

Mr. K. Krishnan Pandala (Member, Quilon Taluk) suggested that Government might maintain between Cochin and Trivandrum a water-way fit for traffic and for steam-launch service. With the opening of the Quilon-Tinnevelly Railway, a good water-way connecting Quilon with Cochin had become necessary.

Dewan's reply.—Noted.

The same member also requested—

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